Demetria
or, On the soul

A new philosophical dialogue, in ancient Greek and English

(Shorter version, without commentary on the ancient Greek text)

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Preface

This work is a philosophical dialogue on the soul, composed in a Socratic form. Because the questions at issue—whether the soul is a real thing or merely an ethical construct and, if it is real, whether it is immortal—are difficult and contested, the dialogue form seemed more fitting than a treatise. It allows definitions to be tested through multiple voices reflecting different commitments.

Demetria offers two conceptions of the soul: first a physical account, and then one in which the soul serves as the seat of an individual's ethical reasons. Melita plays the Socratic role, pressing Demetria as she moves from one account of the soul to another, without ever arriving at a completely satisfactory definition.

The original text is the ancient Greek version, composed with a broadly Platonic style. In this respect, I have followed much the same approach as in my shorter dialogue between Socrates and a scientist, published in *Antigone*.[1]

1 See Bochan 2023.

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1 Introduction

1.1 The dialogue setting

The conversation between the characters takes place in the cemetery outside the ancient walls of Athens, in the hours before dawn on the day of the great procession to Eleusis.

1.2 The argument

Demetria first uses a physicalist argument to try to prove the soul's immortality:

(*Minor premise 1*) The soul is energy.[2]
(*Major premise 1*) Energy is always conserved.
(*Conclusion 1*) The soul is always conserved.

(*Minor premise 2*) What is always conserved survives bodily death.
(*Major premise 2*) What survives bodily death is immortal.
(*Conclusion 2*) What is always conserved is immortal.

(*Conclusion 1*) The soul is always conserved.
(*Conclusion 2*) What is always conserved is immortal.
(*Conclusion 3*) The soul is immortal.

2 Demetria does not use the word 'energy', but instead refers to an ability to move oneself. There is not exact concept in ancient Greek for the modern scientific concept of energy. — I write the minor premise before the major, as this shows more clearly the chaining of the premises through the middle term. (The logic remains the same regardless.)

Melita easily refutes this. Of course, several of the premises could be independently attacked (e.g. the definition of immortality in major premise 2 is thin). Melita focuses her refutation on the fact that conclusion 3 only applies to a very thin concept of the soul itself—a mere physical quantity in the universe, not a single and unique thing for each person.

Demetria responds by providing a richer definition of the soul, as the locus of an individual's unique ethical reasons. Melita's refutation of this is the main act of the dialogue. She first narrows down the opinions that express an individual's unique ethical reasons to the class of *practical* judgements (e.g. 'I should do X'). Next, she shows how, since we often do not know what to do, our practical judgements do not guarantee a single and unique soul persisting throughout a person's life.

In this way, Melita's refutation focuses on an intersection of ethics (concerning ethical reasons), metaphysics (concerning the reality of the soul), and epistemology (what can be known about the soul's reality)—an intersection that Plato often explored in his dialogues.

1.3 Dialogue format

If someone asked me why I wrote this in dialogue format, I could easily give a 'safe' answer, drawing on the extensive literature that examines why others have written philosophical dialogues from Plato onwards.

To take just one recent interpretation, Plato's adoption of the dialogue form was, according to Schofield, above all influenced by Socrates, from whom he took the foundational conviction that philosophy is an inquiry best pursued in conversation, not as 'teaching imparted to those in need of instruction by someone secure in the knowledge of truth.'[3] The dialogue, with its images and allegories working alongside its arguments, could also do what treatise-style exposition could not: loosen the grip of opinion on the

3 Schofield p. 16.

reader's soul, and open the mind to new starting-points for reasoning.[4] The result is that a Platonic dialogue functions not merely as the exposition of a philosopher's conclusions but, as Schofield puts it, as a game played between Plato and the reader—designed to 'baffle as much as to elicit interpretation' and so inviting the reader to do philosophy on their own account.[5]

A 'safe' answer, then, to the question why I have adopted the dialogue format, would be that my reasons are similar to those of Plato, or to any of the many writers of philosophical dialogues in ancient Greek who wrote after Plato: anyone from Aristotle, whose dialogues remain only in fragments, to Plutarch, who seemed to choose dialogue over treatise 'when it came to discussing certain theoretical issues of higher complexity and abstraction',[6] to the twelfth-century archbishop Niketas of Thessalonike, who justified his own dialogues on the grounds that the form 'suits the subtle argument of enquiries that require a particularly accurate examination' and is 'useful and necessary for the discovery of the truth for those who do not want to quarrel.'[7]

But that would be the safe answer. There are of course other reasons why authors have resorted to the dialogue format—among them, making a dry treatise seem less forbidding when dressed in the costume of a conversation, or advancing controversial claims through the mouth of a literary character in the hope of escaping personal responsibility for them. (We saw, however, how poorly the latter worked out for Galileo Galilei, who cast his defence of the Copernican system as a dialogue between three speakers, only to find himself before the Inquisition in 1633, convicted of vehement suspicion of heresy, and condemned to spend the rest of his life under house arrest.) These are not, however, my reasons.

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4 Schofield p. 3, citing Myles Burnyeat.

5 Schofield p. 98.

6 Eleni Kechagia-Ovseiko, 'Plutarch's dialogues: Beyond the Platonic example?', in Cameron and Gaul p. 11.

7 Alessandra Bucossi, 'The six dialogues by Niketas "of Maroneia": a contextualising introduction', in Cameron and Gaul p. 137 (quoting Niketas's proem).

What interests me most in the format is something more particular: its capacity to present philosophical inquiry in which the lead inquirer holds weaker convictions about the question at hand than the person being questioned. This is a very different thing from *oratory*, where a speaker already persuaded of a conclusion works to bring an audience around to it. It is different again from the *political debate*, where politicians recite their strongly-held party convictions. It is even different from the *academic debate*, where participants are assigned positions to affirm or refute that they may never have held personally.

The *philosophical dialogue*, in its original Socratic form, is none of these things. It is, for me, the literary record of an inquisitive mind—educated in a certain method of inquiry, but genuinely uncertain of where that inquiry will lead, and having no firm views on the topic under investigation—brought into living contact with another person's deep personal convictions. That imbalance in commitments between the interlocutors is what drives the drama forward, and nothing captures that drama quite like a dialogue.

A dialogue without this internal source of drama becomes a different sort of text altogether—a treatise in substance, if not in form. Merely adding question marks to sentences, punctuated by dutiful affirmations from a compliant interlocutor, does not make a dialogue. The questioner must press against a wall of conviction, not with opposing views of their own, but with questions driven by genuine curiosity and shaped by a trained method of inquiry. Without this, the dialogue form becomes nothing more than empty imitation—a 'dead scholasticism or a literary dilettantism,'[8] as remote from genuine philosophical dialogue as an oratorical display piece is from genuine rhetoric.

This dialogue therefore seeks to draw upon the same spirit of inquiry that animates the Socratic dialogues. The questioner is Melita, whose views on the soul's immortality are never fully stated, though they are clearly less firmly held than those of Demetria, a priestess who believes in the soul's immortality on both religious and rational grounds. I was not able to begin writing this

8 Jaeger p. 28.

dialogue until I could actually see and hear in my mind the collision of skilful method into mature conviction played out in the imaginary conversation between these two characters, exemplified in their lines of inquiry, reactions, doubts, frustrations, and outbursts of emotion.

One consequence of this approach was my editorial removal of large sections of material that belonged more properly to a treatise than to a dialogue. At one stage in my drafting, for example, Melita developed in much greater detail her threefold distinction between ethical judgements: simple judgements ('X is good'), comparative judgements ('X is better than Y'), and practical judgements ('X ought to be done'). She argued that each class belonged to a distinct kind of inquiry with its own proper object (motives, consequences, or actions), and that valid inferences could not be made from one class to another without simply stipulating that such inferences are valid. Thus one could not move directly from 'X is better than Y' to 'X is good,' nor from 'X is good' to 'X ought to be done' or vice versa, despite the fact that such inferences seem deceptively valid to common sense.[9] Each of the three classes of judgement, then, belonged to a separate science—ethics appears to be one art or science, but is in fact three.

Pursued consistently, the argument could open onto broader questions in modern ethics: whether consequentialist theories ought to be properly confined to comparative judgements, whether deontological theories properly concern only simple judgements, whether either can yield conclusions about what ought to be done, how to best approach ethical dilemmas (if, for instance, a comparative assumption that 'X is the best of all practical possibilities' cannot yield an inference that 'X ought to be done' or even that 'X is good', dilemmas would need to be considered in a new light), and other questions of the same sort. Yet, however suggestive these questions were to me, they seemed alien to the dramatic movement proper to a Socratic dialogue, as none of the

9 The so-called 'is-ought' problem, or 'Hume's Guillotine', would therefore be just one instance of this deeper division between ethical sciences, where no valid inference is in fact available in any direction between the sciences, without some hidden premise stipulating the validity of such an inference.

characters had strong convictions on such matters. In the end, they had to be discarded from the dialogue.

1.4 Ancient Greek

In writing ancient Greek, I take the best Attic prose as my model and guide—above all, Plato and the ten Attic orators. Although Aristotle later wrote extensively on ethics and the soul (and his *Nicomachean Ethics* ranks among my favourite works in all philosophical literature), I do not adopt his technical vocabulary, since to do so would be to import, along with the words, the assumptions and framework of his underlying philosophy. My aim instead is to express philosophical concepts through the language resources already available to the finest Attic writers. Works such as Donovan sometimes serve as a helpful guide here, though the best resources remain the primary texts themselves—for it is often while reading them that I realise there is a better, more efficient, more natural way of expressing something I wrote earlier.

In following the prose of the leading Attic writers, however, my aim is not mere imitation. Rather, I have sought to write in my own way while adopting something more fundamental: Plato's use of particles. In Platonic dialogue, particles do not merely ornament the prose; they trace the movement of the conversation itself, marking emphasis, juxtaposing ideas, signalling transitions and turns, and giving form to everything in language that lies beyond the bare content of the words. This substructure I have adopted, but the rest of the language is mine. The result, I hope, is a prose that is broadly Platonic in its rhythm and texture, without slavishly mimicking any of the Attic authors in their phrasing or style. It is not a pastiche, but my own attempt at a classical style.[10]

10 My approach to writing ancient Greek is explained in the notes to Bochan 2023, and remains the same here.

2 Original Greek text

[1a] Δημητρία

Ἡράκλεις· οὐ καὶ σοί γε, ὦ Μελίτη, ἐνθάδε ᾤμην ἐντεύξεσθαι. δεῦρο δή· οὐ γὰρ ῥᾴδιον διὰ τὸ σκοτεινὸν ἐναργῶς ἰδεῖν. τί δέ; ἦ ἥκεις μυρρίνης στεφάνῳ ἐστεφανωμένη, ὥσπερ μεθ᾽ ἡμῶν εἰς Ἐλευσῖνα ἥξειν διανοουμένη;

Μελίτη

ἔγωγε.

Δημητρία

τί φῄς, ὦ παρθένε; σὺ ὡς ἀληθῶς βούλει τὰ μεγάλα μυηθῆναι;

Μελίτη

ἴσως.

Δημητρία

ἀλλὰ ὑπερφυῶς ὡς θαυμάζω, εἰ τῷ ὄντι ἐν νῷ ἔχεις ταῦτα ποιεῖν· ἐπεί τοι καὶ ὑπώπτευον ἄν σε τῶν μυστηρίων καταφρονεῖν, καὶ ἡγεῖσθαι ἡμᾶς τὰς μὲν τελετάς γε σπουδάζειν, τῆς δ᾽ οὖν ἀληθείας ἀμελεῖν.

[1b] Μελίτη

οὐ μὰ τὸν Δία, ὦ Δημητρία, οὐδ᾽ ἂν αὐτή γε, παρθένος οὖσα, ἢ σὲ ἐραστὴν καλοίην ἢ ἄλλον ὁντινοῦν. καὶ μέντοι οἱ ποιηταί φασι

ἐκείνας τὰς τελετὰς ὠφελίμους τοῖς μεμυημένοις εἶναι· μᾶλλον δ᾽ οὐκ ὠφελίμους, ἀλλ᾽ ὠφελιμωτάτας. τρισόλβιοι γὰρ δή, ὥς φησι Σοφοκλῆς,

> κεῖνοι βροτῶν, οἳ ταῦτα δερχθέντες τέλη
> μόλωσ᾽ ἐς Ἅιδου· τοῖσδε γὰρ μόνοις ἐκεῖ
> ζῆν ἔστι, τοῖς δ᾽ ἄλλοισι πάντ᾽ ἐκεῖ κακά.

[1c] Δημητρία

ἀληθῆ μέντοι νὴ Δία λέγεις. ἀλλ᾽ εἰπέ μοι, ὦ Μελίτη, παρὰ τίνος δὴ ταῦτα τὰ περὶ τὰς τελετὰς μεμάθηκας; ἆρα παρά τινος τῶν οἰκείων;

Μελίτη

ἥκιστά γε, οὐδεὶς γὰρ αὐτῶν ἐμὲ ἱκανῶς ἐπαίδευσεν· οὐκοῦν ὅτε του ἀκούοιμι ἐν ἀγορᾷ λέγοντος περὶ τῶν τοιούτων, ἀκροωμένη παρὰ τούτου οὕτως ἐμάνθανον.

τόδε τοίνυν μοι εἰπέ, ὦ Δημητρία, διὰ τί ποτε καὶ σὺ δεῦρο ἀφίκου; οὐ γάρ που ἐχρῆν σε, τὴν τῆς Δήμητρος ἱέρειαν, ἐν τῷ Ἐλευσινίῳ ἤδη παρεῖναι; ἆρ᾽ οὐκ ἄτοπόν τι γέγονεν, ὥστε σε νῦν ἐν Κεραμεικῷ τυγχάνειν παροῦσαν;

[1d] Δημητρία

οὐ δῆτα, ὦ Μελίτη, ἀλλά πάντων, ὡς ἔοικεν, ἀτοπώτατον. εἰσῆλθον γὰρ ἐγὼ ὡς πρῳαίτατα εἰς τὸ Ἐλευσίνιον πράξουσα τὰ προσήκοντα· καίτοι οἶσθ᾽ ὅτι οὐκ ἔξεστί μοι οὔτε εἰπεῖν ὁποῖά ἐστιν, οὔθ᾽ ὑποσημαίνειν· ἀλλ᾽ ἐκεῖνα ἡμῖν, ὦ παρθένε, ἔστω ἄρρητα.

τούτων οὖν πραχθέντων, λαμπρόν τι ἔδοξέ μοι ἔξωθεν φανῆναι· καὶ δῆτα ἐξελθοῦσα ἐκ τοῦ ἱεροῦ, εἶδόν τινα ἀπιοῦσαν, ἣ καὶ γυνὴ μὲν ἐφαίνετο, οὐ μὴν ἀλλ᾽ ἔλαμπέ γ᾽ ὥσπερ ἀστήρ.

[1e] τὸ μὲν οὖν πρῶτον ἐγὼ κατιδοῦσα αὐτὴν ἀτεχνῶς ἐξεπλάγην καὶ οὐχ οἵα τ᾽ ἦν κινεῖσθαι, ὅναρ γὰρ δὴ ὁρᾶν ᾤμην. ἔπειτα μέντοι ἀνεμνήσθην ὧν Ὅμηρος ἔφη περὶ τῆς Δήμητρος, ὅτε τινὶ θνητῇ ἐφάνη·

τῆλε δὲ φέγγος ἀπὸ χροὸς ἀθανάτοιο
λάμπε θεᾶς, ξανθαὶ δὲ κόμαι κατενήνοθεν ὤμους,
αὐγῆς δ᾽ ἐπλήσθη πυκινὸς δόμος ἀστεροπῆς ὥς·

προθύμως δὴ ἐπηκολούθησα αὐτῇ· ἐνταῦθα μέντοι ἀφικομένη, τὴν μὲν οὖν θεὸν οὐδαμοῦ ηὗρον, ἀλλ᾽ οὖν δὴ σέ γε, ὦ Μελίτη, μόνην κατέλαβον ἐν Κεραμεικῷ ἑστηκυῖαν.

τόδε δέ μοι λέγε· τοῦ ἕνεκα ἐνταῦθα δὴ περιμένεις; ἢ οὐκ οἶσθ᾽ ὅτι ἄλλοσε συλλέγονται οἱ μέλλοντες εἰς Ἐλευσῖνα πομπεύειν;

[2a] Μελίτη

ἔγωγε, ὦ Δημητρία, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐκεῖσε βαδίζουσα, σῆμά τοι ἐξαίφνης ἐθαύμασα.

Δημητρία

τί δέ; μῶν τουτί;

Μελίτη

πάνυ μὲν οὖν.

Δημητρία

τί οὖν δή;

Μελίτη

τοῦτο γάρ μοι θαυμαστὸν καὶ ἅμα ἡδὺ φαίνεται ἰδεῖν· εἰ μὲν γὰρ τοὺς οἰκειοτάτους τεθνεῶτας ἴδοιμι, σφόδρα λυπηθείην ἄν, ὡς ἀπεστερημένη αὐτῶν. ἀλλ᾽ οὖν δὴ τοὐναντίον γε ἐν τῷ παρόντι πάσχω· τοῦτο γοῦν τὸ σῆμα οὐδαμῇ προσέοικεν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἐνθάδε τεθαμμένῃ (ἔγνων γὰρ ἔγωγε αὐτήν), ἀλλὰ μὴν μνημεῖόν ἐστι μόνον. ὅταν οὖν ἴδω τοιοῦτόν τι, σφόδρα τε χαίρω, ἡδέως τε ἀναμιμνήσκομαι ὧν γε ζῶσα εἰώθει λέγειν καὶ πράττειν. οὐκοῦν διὰ ταῦτα, ὦ Δημητρία, εἴπερ τι ἄλλο, καὶ τουτὶ φαίην ἂν ὡς ἀληθῶς ἡδὺ ἰδεῖν.

[2b] Δημητρία

ἡδὺ δῆτα· οὐ μὴν εἰκός γε ἀεὶ ὡσαύτως κατὰ ταὐτὰ ἔχειν, ἐπειδὰν γὰρ ἄνεμοι τε γένωνται καὶ ὑετοὶ καὶ σεισμοί, προσδοκῶ δὴ τόδε γε τῷ χρόνῳ παντάπασι διαφθαρήσεσθαι· ὅτι δ᾽ οὖν ἀθάνατόν ἐστιν ἡ ψυχὴ καὶ οὐδέποτε ἀπόλλυται, τοῦτο δὴ οὐ μόνον προσδοκῶ, ἀλλὰ καὶ σαφῶς οἶδα.

Μελίτη

πῶς λέγεις, ὦ Δημητρία; ἆρά γε ἀπόρρητά τινα φράζεις περὶ τῆς ψυχῆς ὅπῃ ἔχει; καίτοι ᾤμην σε οὐδενὶ ἄλλῳ μηνύσειν τὰ τοιαῦτα, ἀλλ᾽ ἢ τοῖς μεμυημένοις· ἦ γάρ;

Δημητρία

πάνυ γε, ὦ παρθένε, οὐ μέντοι εἴρηκα οὐδὲν τῶν ἐν ἀπορρήτοις λεγομένων, ἀλλ᾽ ὅπερ καὶ τοῖς ὀρθῶς λογιζομένοις κατάδηλον ἂν εἴη.

[2c] Μελίτη

πῶς λέγεις; ἦ ἔχεις ἀποδεῖξαι ὡς ἄρα ἀθάνατόν ἐστιν ἡ ψυχή;

Δημητρία

πάνυ μὲν οὖν· ἐπειδὴ δέ που ἔτι ἐγχωρεῖ, ταύτην τὴν ἀπόδειξιν καὶ νῦν ποιήσομαι, ἐὰν βούλῃ ἀκούειν.

Μελίτη

βούλομαι μέντοι νὴ Δία, καὶ μὴν καὶ ἡγοῦμαι κατὰ τύχην τινά σοι ἄρτι ἐντετυχηκέναι, οὐχ ἅπαξ γὰρ δή, ὡς ἔοικε, τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς φύσιν μαθήσομαι τήμερον, ἀλλὰ δίς· ἀνθρωπίνῳ μὲν λόγῳ ἐνταῦθα, καὶ μὴν θείῳ γέ τινι Ἐλευσῖνι. νῦν οὖν μοι διήγησαι ἅπερ ἔφης περὶ τούτων σαφῶς εἰδέναι.

[2d] Δημητρία

καὶ μὴν πάντες ἡμεῖς, ὦ Μελίτη, τοῖς μὲν ὄμμασίν γε τὰ ὁρατὰ ὡς οὐκ ἔστιν ἐνίοτε ὁρῶμεν, τά τ᾽ ἴσα ἡγούμενοι εἶναι ἄνισα, καὶ τὰ ἐγγὺς πόρρω, καὶ ἄλλα πολλὰ τοιαῦτα, ὥστε καὶ πολλάκις ἄδηλον ἡμῖν γίγνεται ὅπῃ ποτὲ ὀρθῶς ἔχει· ἐπειδὰν δέ τι ἐπιδείξωμεν ἱκανῷ χρώμενοι λόγῳ, οὐκ ἔσθ᾽ ὅπως οὐ καὶ τῆς ἀληθείας ἅψεται ἕκαστος ἡμῶν· ταύτῃ οὖν γνοίημεν ἂν ὡς ἡ ψυχὴ φύσει ἐστὶν ἀθάνατον.

τόδε τοίνυν σου δέομαι· ὅσα ἔκ γε τῶν αἰσθήσεων δοξάζεις περὶ τῆς ψυχῆς, ἔασον ταῦτα χαίρειν· ὥσπερ οἱ πλέοντες, ὅποι ἂν ὁ κυβερνήτης ἄγῃ τὴν ναῦν, ἐκεῖσε ἴασιν, καὶ νῦν οὕτως ἐκεῖνό γε μόνον, ὃ ἂν ὁ λόγος σε ἀναγκάζῃ, ὁμολόγησον.

Μελίτη

ταῦτ᾽ ἔσται.

[2e] Δημητρία

πρῶτον μὲν οὖν, πρὶν ἀποδεῖξαι ὅτι ἀθάνατόν ἐστιν ἡ ψυχή, ἐπισκεψώμεθα ἃ μυθολογοῦσιν οἱ ποιηταὶ Θανάτου πέρι· τοῦτον γὰρ δὴ συντιθέντες τὸν μῦθον, ἤτοι θείᾳ γε μανίᾳ ἢ ἄλλῳ τινὶ τρόπῳ, δοκοῦσί μοι ηὑρηκέναι εἰκόνα τινὰ τῆς ἀληθείας. ὁ γὰρ Ζεύς, ὥς φασιν, κράτιστος ὢν τῶν θεῶν καὶ δυνατώτατος, οὐχ οὕτως ἰσχύει ὥστ᾽ αὐτῷ τῷ Θανάτῳ ἐναντιοῦσθαι, οὐδὲ οἷός τε ἦν ἐκ θανάτου σῶσαι Σαρπηδόνα, καίπερ παῖδα αὐτοῦ ὄντα, ἀλλὰ ἔφη λυπούμενος·

> ὤ μοι ἐγών, ὅ τέ μοι Σαρπηδόνα φίλτατον ἀνδρῶν
> μοῖρ᾽ ὑπὸ Πατρόκλοιο Μενοιτιάδαο δαμῆναι.

οὐδεὶς γὰρ δήπου τόν γε Θάνατον ἂν κωλύσειεν, οὔτε δώροις, οὔτ᾽ εὐχαῖς, οὔτε θυσίαις, οὔτε παίδων δακρύοις, οὔτε γονέων ὀδυρμοῖς, οὐδὲ καὶ εἰ βούλοιτο ὁ Ζεὺς ὁ Σωτήρ.

[3a] διὸ δὴ καὶ ὁ Ἀπόλλων ἔφη τοὺς τοῦ Θανάτου τρόπους εἶναι ‘ἐχθρούς γε θνητοῖς καὶ θεοῖς στυγουμένους’. τόδε τοίνυν συγχωρήσωμεν τοῖς ποιηταῖς, τὸν Θάνατον οὕτω σφόδρα

διαφθείρειν τε δὴ καὶ ἀπολλύναι τοῦτον ἐφ᾽ ὃν ἔπεισιν, ὥστε τὸν τεθνεῶτα μήτε μηδαμοῦ ἔτι εἶναι, μήτε αὖ οἷόν τε ἀναβιῶναι.

ἀλλ᾽ οὖν δὴ τούτων τῶν ποιητῶν οὐδεὶς πώποτε εἶπεν οὐδ᾽ ἠνίξατο, ὡς ἄρα δέοι τὴν ψυχὴν διαφθαρῆναι, ὅτε τις ἀποθνήσκοι, ἀλλ᾽ ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἔφασαν τὸν μὲν ἄνθρωπον ἀπολεῖσθαι, τὴν δὲ ψυχὴν περιέσεσθαι. Εὐριπίδης γοῦν λέγει·

> ἤδη δὲ τόνδε Θάνατον εἰσορῶ πέλας,
> ἱερέα θανόντων, ὅς νιν εἰς Ἅιδου δόμους
> μέλλει κατάξειν· συμμέτρως δ᾽ ἀφίκετο,
> φρουρῶν τόδ᾽ ἦμαρ ᾧ θανεῖν αὐτὴν χρεών.

—ἀτάρ, ὦ Μελίτη, δήλη εἶ ἀπιστοῦσα.

[3b] Μελίτη

μὰ Δί᾽ οὐκ ἔγωγε, ὦ Δημητρία.

Δημητρία

ἀπιστεῖς δῆτα, καὶ εἰκότως γε· ὥσπερ, ἀποθανόντος τοῦ παιδίου, μήτηρ οὐκ ἂν ἔχοι δηλῶσαι ὁπόσα τι πάσχει, οὔτε κλαίουσα οὔτε σιγῶσα—καὶ γὰρ λυπηρότερά γε πάσχει ἢ ὥστε δηλοῦσθαι—οὕτω καὶ οἱ ποιηταὶ ἡμῖν εἴδωλα τῶν ὄντων θαυμαστὰ καὶ πάγκαλα ἀπέφηναν ἐνθουσιάζοντες, ἀλλ᾽ οὐκ αὐτὸ τὸ ὄν.

[3c] ἐγὼ μέντοι, οὗτοι μῦθον λέγουσα, ἐπιδείξω ἐκ τῶνδε ὡς ἀθάνατόν ἐστιν ἡ ψυχή· πρῶτον μὲν ὅτι οὐκ ἄλλο τί ἐστι ψυχὴ ἢ ἐκεῖνο ᾧ οἱ ἄνθρωποι δι᾽ αὐτῶν κινοῦνται. ἀλλὰ μὴν τό γε τοιοῦτον οὐκ ἀπόλλυται διὰ τοῦτο, ὅτι τὸ ἀνθρώπινον σῶμα αὐξάνεται ἢ ἀλλοιοῦται ἢ φθίνει. καὶ δὴ καὶ εἰ μὴ ἀπόλοιτο τὸ ᾧπερ ἕκαστος αὐτὸν κινεῖ οὐδενὶ τῶν τοιούτων, οὐδ᾽ ἂν τῷ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου θανάτῳ. ἀθάνατον οὖν τὸ ὑπὸ τοῦ θανάτου μὴ διαφθειρόμενον κλητέον· συγχωρητέον ἄρα τὴν ψυχὴν ἀθάνατον εἶναι.

[3d] ἄρξομαι μήν, ὦ Μελίτη, ἐντεῦθεν λέγουσα, ἐκ τοῦ ἕτερόν τι τοῦ ἀνθρώπου πεφυκέναι τὴν ψυχήν, παροῦσαν μόνον ὀλίγον χρόνον αὐτῷ. τοῖς μὲν γὰρ ἄλλοις τοῦθ᾽ ὑπετέθη ἄνευ λόγου, καίτοι

πῶς ἄν τις ὀρθῶς φαίη τὴν ψυχὴν ἀθάνατον εἶναι, εἰ μὴ οἴοιτό γε αὐτὴν ἕτερόν τι τοῦ θνητοῦ ἀνθρώπου πεφυκέναι;

Μελίτη

πῶς γάρ;

[3e] Δημητρία

ἴθι δή, τόδε μοι εἰπέ· ἆρ᾽ οὐκ ἔνι τις ἐν σοὶ ἐπιθυμία τοῦ καὶ ἐπειδὰν ἀποθάνῃς ἔτι εἶναι; τί δέ; οὐκ ἀποκρίνῃ, ὦ Μελίτη; μηδαμῶς τοίνυν ἀποκρύψῃ ὅ τι ἄν σοι δοκῇ περὶ τῶν τοιούτων, μόναι γὰρ δὴ ἐνταῦθά ἐσμεν, ὥστ᾽ οὐδείς σου ἀκούσεται πλὴν ἐμοῦ, ἀλλὰ παρρησιαζομένη ἀπόκριναι.

Μελίτη

ἔνι γάρ.

Δημητρία

οὐκοῦν πότερον φῂς αὐτὴ ἔτι ἔσεσθαι μετὰ τὸ ἀποθανεῖν, ἢ ἄλλο τι;

Μελίτη

πῶς τί τοῦτο λέγεις, ὦ Δημητρία;

[4a] Δημητρία

οἶσθα δήπου ὅτι δεήσει ποτὲ καὶ σὲ τὸν βίον τελευτᾶν· οὐ γάρ;

Μελίτη

πάνυ μὲν οὖν.

Δημητρία

ἐπειδὰν δὲ ἀποθάνῃς, οὐκέτι ἔσῃ, οὔθ᾽ ὡς ἔχεις τὰ νῦν, οὔτ᾽ ἄλλως πως.

Μελίτη

ἀληθῆ λέγεις.

Δημητρία

ὅταν γοῦν αὐτὴ μηκέτ᾽ ἄνθρωπος ᾖς, ἐλπίζεις τι σοῦ περιγενήσεσθαι.

Μελίτη

πῶς γὰρ οὔ;

Δημητρία

τοιγάρτοι ἄλλο τι οἴει νῦν μὲν παρεῖναί σοι, καὶ μὴν ὕστερόν γ᾽ οὐ διαφθαρήσεσθαι ὑπὸ τοῦ Θανάτου· ὃ δὴ καὶ ψυχήν, εἴπερ ἔστι τοιοῦτόν τι, καλοῦμεν.

Μελίτη

πάντως δήπου, ὦ Δημητρία.

[4b] Δημητρία

ὥσπερ οἱ ἀθάνατοι ἡμῖν ἐνεποίησαν τὸ βούλεσθαι, ἐπειδὰν τελευτήσωμεν, τοὺς παῖδας ἔτι ζῆν, οὕτω καὶ οὐδεὶς ὅστις οὐ βούλεται τὴν ψυχήν, ἐπειδὰν ἀπαλλαγῇ τοῦ σώματος, διατελεῖν ζῶσαν, καθάπερ ὁ ἐπιβάτης, τοῦ πλοίου καταδύντος, ἐπιθυμεῖ σωθῆναι τε καὶ περιγίγνεσθαι.

ὅτι μὲν οὖν ἄλλο τι νομίζομεν εἶναι τὴν ψυχὴν ἢ τὸν ἄνθρωπον ᾧπερ τυγχάνει παροῦσα, τοῦτ᾽ ἔστω ἱκανὸν τεκμήριον· τὸ δὲ μετὰ τοῦτο σκεπτέον, ὁποῖόν τί ποτ᾽ ἐστὶν ἡ ψυχή.

Μελίτη

σκεπτέον δή.

[4c] Δημητρία

καὶ μὴν οὐδ᾽ ἐκεῖνό γε χαλεπὸν σκοπεῖν, ἀλλὰ καὶ πάντων ῥᾷστον. ἆρά γε οἴει τινὰ οὕτως ἀνόητόν τε εἶναι καὶ ἀσύνετον, ὅστις οὐκ ἂν διακρίνοι τὸ ἔμψυχον σῶμα καὶ τὸ ἄψυχον; οὐκέτι γὰρ δὴ πάρεστι τῷ τετελευτηκότι ἐκεῖνο, ᾧπερ ζῶν αὐτὸς αὑτὸν κινεῖν ἐδύνατο· ὁμολογητέον ἄρα τοῦτο οὐκ ἄλλο τι ἢ ψυχὴν εἶναι. ἀλλ᾽ ἔν γε τῷ παρόντι τοσοῦτον μόνον ἐνδείκνυμαι, ὅτι μετὰ τὸ ἀποθανεῖν ἔτι ἔσται τοῦτο τὸ ᾧπερ ἕκαστος αὑτὸν κινεῖ.

[4d] εἰ γάρ τοι ὁτιοῦν ἐπιχειροῦμεν ὁρίζεσθαι, ὦ παρθένε, πάντων μάλιστα ἡμᾶς χρὴ εὐλαβεῖσθαι, ὅπως μή τι ἐροῦμεν χαλεπώτερον τοῦ δέοντος κατανοῆσαι· ἐπιθυμία μὲν γὰρ λάβοι ἂν ἡμᾶς, δοξοσοφίας ἕνεκα, τὸ πᾶσι κατάδηλον ἐκβαλεῖν, κἂν δοκῇ ἡμῖν καλῶς ἔχειν, καὶ ἄλλο τι μεῖζον τε καὶ σεμνότερον καὶ ποικιλώτερον ἢ τἀληθὲς ἀποφαίνειν.

ἀλλ᾽ οὖν δὴ τόδε γε μόνον, ὦ Μελίτη, πρέπει διισχυρίζεσθαι, τὸ δοκοῦν καταφανέστατόν τε καὶ ἀληθέστατον εἶναι. τοιγάρτοι νῦν φῶμεν, ὥσπερ νυνδὴ ἐλέγομεν, ἅτε οὐδὲν τούτου ἐναργέστερον ὂν οὐδ᾽ ἀληθέστερον, τὴν ψυχὴν εἶναι αὐτὸ τοῦτο ᾧπερ ἕκαστος αὑτὸν κινεῖ.

[4e] καὶ μὴν καὶ αὐτὸ καθ᾽ αὑτὸ οὐδέποτε μεταβάλλει. ὁρῶμεν γοῦν ὅτι ὅταν σῶμα ὁτιοῦν μεταβάλλῃ, μένει τὸ ᾧπερ ἕκαστος αὑτὸν κινεῖ· κατὰ γὰρ πάντων τῶν τοιούτων οὔτε φαμὲν ἐκ τοῦ μηδενὸς γίγνεσθαι, οὔτε εἰς τὸ μηδὲν ἀπόλλυσθαι, ἀλλὰ τὸ μὲν σῶμα πολλαχῇ μεταβάλλει, τοτὲ μὲν θερμότερον γιγνόμενον, τοτὲ δὲ ψυχρότερον, ἐνίοτε καὶ ἄλλως πως μεταβάλλον, τὸ δέ ᾧπερ ἕκαστος αὑτὸν κινεῖ ὅπερ ἦν ἀεὶ μένει, οὔτε αὐξανόμενον οὔτε φθίνον. οἱ γὰρ δὴ πάντα τὰ κατὰ τὸ σῶμα ἀκριβῶς ἐπισκοπούμενοι οὐδέποτε ἑωράκασιν αὐτὸ μεταβάλλον.

[5a] ἀναγκαῖον οὖν ὁμολογεῖν ὅτι τοῦτο, ὅταν τὸ σῶμα μεταβάλλῃ, οὔτε ἐκ τοῦ μηδενὸς γίγνεται, οὔτε εἰς τὸ μηδὲν ἀπόλλυται, ἀλλὰ ἀεὶ κατὰ ταὐτὰ ὡσαύτως ἔχει, καὶ αὐτὸ καθ᾽ αὑτὸ οὐδέποτε

οὐδεμίαν μεταβολὴν δέχεται. εἰ γάρ τις καὶ πᾶσαν μεταβολὴν εὖ μάλα ζητοῖ, οὐδαμοῦ ἂν εὕροι ὅ τι ἂν πάσχοι αὐτὸ τὸ ᾧπερ ἕκαστος αὐτὸν κινεῖ, μᾶλλον ἢ τὸ σῶμα· ὁπόσον γὰρ ἂν ᾖ, τοσοῦτόν γε ἀεὶ ἔσται, καίπερ ἄλλοσε κινούμενον καὶ διὰ τῶν ὁρατῶν διεξιόν, οὔτε γὰρ πώποτε γίγνεται οὔτε ἀπόλλυται, ἀλλὰ τὸν ἀεὶ χρόνον διαμένει.

[5b] τούτων δ᾽ οὕτως ἐχόντων, οὐδέποτε παντάπασιν διολεῖται αὐτὸ τὸ ᾧπερ ἕκαστος αὐτὸν κινεῖ. εἰ γὰρ οὖν διεφθείρετο, τότ᾽ ἂν ἐκ τοῦ ὄντος μετέβαινεν εἰς τὸ μὴ ὄν. ἀλλὰ μὴν ὡμολογήκαμεν ἄρτι αὐτὸ πάσῃ μεταβολῇ παρεῖναι καὶ οὐδεμιᾷ μεταβολῇ διαφθαρῆναι. οὐδεμία ἄρα μεταβολή ἐστιν ᾗ ἂν ἀπόλοιτο. πῶς γὰρ ἂν τοῦτο αὐτό, διὰ πάσης μεταβολῆς μένον, ἠτινιοῦν μεταβολῇ διαφθαρείη; εἰ οὖν ἡ ψυχή ἐστι τῶν διὰ πάσης κατὰ τὸ σῶμα μεταβολῆς ἀεὶ μενόντων, οὐδεμία ἂν τῶν τοιούτων μεταβολῶν ἀπολλύοι αὐτήν.

[5c] ἐπισκεψώμεθα τοίνυν, ὦ παρθένε, τὰ μετὰ ταῦτα. τὸ γὰρ ἀποθνῄσκειν, ὥς φασιν οἱ ποιηταὶ, οὐκ ἄλλο τι ἢ διαφθορὰ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου· ὁ μὲν γὰρ ἀποθανὼν οὐκέτ᾽ ἔστιν, ἀλλὰ μέντοι εἴ γέ τι ἄφθαρτον πέφυκεν, οὐκ ἂν δέξαιτο ταύτην τὴν φθορὰν ᾗπερ τὰ θνητὰ ἀπόλλυται. ἐπειδὴ δὲ φθοράν τινά φαμεν εἶναι τὸ ἀποθνῄσκειν, τί ἄλλο χρὴ καλεῖν ὃ ἀποθανόντος τοῦ ἀνθρώπου μὴ δέχεται φθορὰν ἠντινοῦν ἢ ἀθάνατον; ἀθάνατον γὰρ δὴ λέγω οὐκ ἄλλο ἢ τὸ μηδαμῇ ὑπὸ τοῦ θανάτου διαφθαρῆναι. ἀνάγκη ἄρα πᾶν τὸ ἄφθαρτον καὶ ἀθάνατον εἶναι· εἰ γάρ τι μηδαμῶς οἷόν τε διαφθαρῆναι, πῶς ἄν ποτε ὑπὸ τοῦ θανάτου ἀπόλοιτο;

[5d] νῦν οὖν, ὦ Μελίτη, ἴδωμεν τί δὴ ἐκ τῶν προειρημένων συμβαίνει. ὡμολογήκαμεν γὰρ πρῶτον μὲν τὴν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ψυχὴν οὐδὲν ἄλλο εἶναι ἢ τοῦθ᾽ ᾧπερ αὐτὸς αὐτὸν κινεῖ. ἔπειτα ὅτι τὸ τοιοῦτον διὰ πάσης μεταβολῆς διαμένει καὶ οὐδέποτε ἀπόλλυται. καὶ μὴν τούτου οὕτως ἔχοντος δεῖ ἄφθαρτόν τε εἶναι καὶ ἀθάνατον. δῆλον οὖν ἐκ τούτων ὅτι τελευτήσαντος τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἡ ψυχὴ οὐκ ἀπόλλυται· ἀλλὰ μέντοι τό γε μηδαμῇ ὑπὸ τοῦ θανάτου ἀπόλλυσθαι ἀθάνατον· ἀναγκαῖον ἄρα κατὰ τοῦτον τὸν λόγον τὴν ψυχὴν ἀθάνατον εἶναι.

[5e] καὶ γὰρ ὥσπερ Ὅμηρος ἔφη,

> ὅτ᾽ ἐν αἰγιαλῷ πολυηχέϊ κῦμα θαλάσσης
> ὄρνυτ᾽ ἐπασσύτερον Ζεφύρου ὕπο κινήσαντος·

> πόντῳ μέν τε πρῶτα κορύσσεται, αὐτὰρ ἔπειτα
> χέρσῳ ῥηγνύμενον μεγάλα βρέμει, ἀμφὶ δέ τ᾽ ἄκρας
> κυρτὸν ἐὸν κορυφοῦται, ἀποπτύει δ᾽ ἁλὸς ἄχνην·

οὐ μὴν ἀλλὰ μενεῖ γε τὸ ᾧπερ ἕκαστος αὐτὸν κινεῖ, ἐπειδὰν καὶ αὐτὸ τὸ κῦμα παντάπασι καταθραυσθῇ· οὕτω δὴ, ὅταν τις τελευτήσῃ, οὐκ ἀνάγκη καὶ ἐκεῖνο διαφθαρῆναι.

τοιγάρτοι ὁ μὲν Θάνατός γε, ὥς φαμεν, ἐφ᾽ ἅπαντας ἐπέρχεται τοὺς ἀνθρώπους· τότε δὴ παύονται αἰσθανόμενοί τε καὶ κινούμενοι, καὶ μὴν ψυχρά γε γενόμενα φθίνει τὰ σώματα, καὶ τῷ χρόνῳ μαραίνεται· ἀλλ᾽ οὐ μέντοι τὸ ᾧπερ ἕκαστος αὐτὸν κινεῖ, ὃ δὴ ψυχὴν καλοῦμεν, οὐδὲν τοιοῦτον πείσεται, οὔτε τότε οὔτ᾽ ἄλλοτε. διὸ δή, ὦ παρθένε, τὴν ψυχὴν ἀθάνατον συγχωρητέον.

[6a] εἰ οὖν ὁ τῆς Νυκτὸς ὑὸς ἐπίοι ἀπειλῶν διαφθερεῖν οὐ μόνον ἐμὲ ἀλλὰ καὶ τὴν ψυχήν, μειδιάσασα ἂν ἠρέμα εἴποιμι πρὸς αὐτόν·

> χαῖρε, ὦ φίλε· τὸν μὲν οὖν βίον σοι ἑκοῦσα ἀποδίδωμι, δίκαιος γὰρ δὴ εἶ τὰ σαυτοῦ ἀπαιτεῖν. ἀλλ᾽ οὐκ ἔσθ᾽ ὅπως ἂν ἀπόλοιτο ἡ ψυχή, ὥς γ᾽ ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ. ποιῶμεν τοίνυν, ὦ Θάνατε, οἷα χρή· τὴν μὲν ψυχήν γε εἰς Ἅιδου πορεύεσθαι, σὲ δὲ δὴ ἄγειν αὐτήν, οὕτω γὰρ ἡμᾶς ἀμφοτέρους ἀναγκάζουσιν αἱ Μοῖραι.

[6b] Μελίτη

καλῶς μὲν δὴ λέγεις, ὦ Δημητρία· καὶ σχεδόν γε ὑπὸ τούτου τοῦ λόγου πέπεισμαι. ἀλλὰ μέντοι ἐξ ἀρχῆς γε τάδε ἐπισκεψώμεθα· ἆρα τὴν ψυχὴν φῂς εἶναι οὐδὲν ἄλλο ἢ τὸ ᾧπερ ἕκαστος αὐτὸν κινεῖ, καὶ ταῦτ᾽ ἀόρατον;

Δημητρία

φημὶ γὰρ οὖν.

Μελίτη

ἀλλὰ μὴν ποσόν γ᾽ ἂν εἴη τὸ τοιοῦτον, ὥσπερ τρία ἢ ἕξ, δυνατὸν εἶναι μεῖζον ἢ ἔλαττον ἢ ἴσον ἄλλῳ τινί. οὐκοῦν τῶν ἡμετέρων ψυχῶν, ὦ Δημητρία, τὴν μὲν μείζω, τὴν δ᾽ ἐλάττω φῂς εἶναι, καί μετρεῖν τιν᾽ ἂν αὐτάς, εἴτ᾽ ἄρα μήκει, εἴτε βάρει, εἴθ᾽ ὅτῳ τρόπῳ;

[6c] Μελίτη

οὐδὲ γὰρ τοῦτό σε ἐρωτῶ, εἴ τι ἡγῇ πάντα τὰ τῆς ψυχῆς ἴδια—μνήμας τε καὶ ἐπιστήμας καὶ ἀρετὰς καὶ ἄλλα τοιαῦτα—περιέσεσθαι ἐπειδὰν ἀποθάνῃς, ἀλλ᾽ εἴπερ τι τοιοῦτον ὡς ἀληθῶς οἴει τὴν ψυχὴν εἶναι, ὃ νῦν μὲν τὸ σῶμα κινεῖ, πρότερον δὲ κῦμα ἴσως ἐκίνησεν, ἢ νέφος, ἢ πνεῦμα. δοκεῖς γάρ μοι τὸ τοιοῦτον λέγειν· πῶς οὖν ἂν εἰδεῖμεν ἐκεῖνο διὰ παντὸς τοῦ χρόνου ἓν καὶ ταὐτὸν αὐτῷ μένον, καὶ οὐχὶ ποσόν τι ὂν μόνον, διὰ τοῦ παντὸς πανταχῇ τεταμένον; ἀτὰρ τοῦτό γέ που λέγεις.

Δημητρία

οὐ μὰ τὸν Δία, ὦ Μελίτη.

[6d] Δημητρία

καί μοι λέγε, πότερον μαθεῖν βουλομένη ἐρωτᾷς, ἢ παίζεις λέγουσα;

Μελίτη

τί δὲ δὴ ταῦτα ἐρωτᾷς, ὦ Δημητρία;

Δημητρία

ἐπεί τοι καὶ οὐδὲν χαλεπώτερόν μοι ἢ ἐλέγχεσθαι περὶ ὧνπερ μάλιστα νομίζω ὑπό τινος ἐπιδεικνυμένης τὴν ἐν τοῖς λόγοις δεινότητα· εἰ οὖν νίκην ἐν λόγοις ζητεῖς, ἐπιχειροῦσα καταισχῦναί με καὶ αὐτὴ δεινὴ φαίνεσθαι, ἐῶμεν χαίρειν τὸν λόγον.

Μελίτη

ἀλλὰ ἐπιθυμῶ γε παρὰ σοῦ μανθάνειν, ὦ Δημητρία, ὅ τι ποτ᾽ ἐστὶν ἡ ψυχή.

[6e] Δημητρία

εἶεν, ὦ παρθένε· ἀλλ᾽ οὖν δοκεῖ μοι ἡ ψυχὴ θεῷ τινι τῶν ἐν τοῖς μύθοις λεγομένων προσεοικέναι, ἀόρατόν τι ὄν, καὶ αἴτιόν γε δήπου τοῦ πράττειν ἕκαστον ἑκάστοτε· ὁ γὰρ δὴ Ὅμηρος περὶ Ἀχιλλέως ἔφη·

> τῇ δεκάτῃ δ᾽ ἀγορὴν δὲ καλέσσατο λαὸν Ἀχιλλεύς·
> τῷ γὰρ ἐπὶ φρεσὶ θῆκε θεὰ λευκώλενος Ἥρη·

καίτοι κατὰ τὸν ἀκριβῆ λόγον οὐ φατέον ὑπὸ τῆς θεοῦ Ἀχιλλέα οὕτω κινηθῆναι, ἀλλ᾽ ὑπὸ τῆς αὐτοῦ ψυχῆς.

[7a] Μελίτη

δοκῶ μὲν οὖν μανθάνειν ἃ λέγεις· τὸν δὲ μῦθον ἐῶμεν χαίρειν, ἀλλὰ λέγε τί ποτ᾽ ἐστὶν οὗ ἕνεκα μία τις πέφυκεν ἡ ψυχή.

Δημητρία

οὐ μανθάνω ὅ τι λέγεις.

Μελίτη

τί οὖν ἂν κωλύσειέν σε τρεῖς ἢ πέντε ἢ καὶ μυρίας ψυχὰς ἔχειν; μὴ γὰρ οὐ τοῦτο λέγῃς, ὅτι διὰ τὸ ἓν μόνον σῶμά σοι εἶναι, καὶ μίαν σοι ψυχὴν δεῖ παρεῖναι.

Δημητρία

τί δ᾽ οὔ;

[7b] Μελίτη

ἀλλὰ μὴν ἀθάνατόν τι, ὡς φῄς, ἡ ψυχή, σμικρὸν δὴ μέρος τοῦ παντὸς χρόνου διάγει ἐν τῷ σώματι· ἦ γάρ;

Δημητρία

πάνυ μὲν οὖν.

Μελίτη

ἄτοπον ἄρα ἂν εἴη διὰ τοῦτο εἰπεῖν τὴν ψυχὴν μίαν γενέσθαι, ὅτι ὀλίγον χρόνον τῷ σώματι πάρεστιν, ὥσπερ γ᾽ ἂν ἄτοπον εἴη τὸν σμικρὸν μὲν χρόνον ἐνθάδε ἐπιδημοῦντα, τὸν δ᾽ ἄλλον βίον ἄλλοθι οἰκοῦντα, Ἀθηναῖον καλεῖν.

Δημητρία

φαίνεται.

[7c] Μελίτη

ἐπὶ τίνι μέντοι λέγεις μίαν εἶναι τὴν ψυχήν;

Δημητρία

ἀναμιμνῃσκομένη γὰρ οὖν, ὦ Μελίτη, ὅσων διὰ παντὸς τοῦ βίου ἔπραξα, ταῦτ᾽ οὐχ ὁρῶ εἰκῇ γε πεπραγμένα, ἀλλ᾽ εὖ τεταγμένα τε καὶ κεκοσμημένα· οὐ γὰρ ἔγωγε, ὥσπερ πλοῖον ὑπὸ χειμώνων ἀγρίων πανταχῇ φερόμενον, ἄλλοτε ἄλλῃ ἐπιθυμίᾳ ἠναγκαζόμην πράττειν, ὥστ᾽ ἀντὶ μιᾶς δοκεῖν εἶναι πολλαί, ἀλλ᾽ ἔστι τι ἐν ἐμοί, ὡς ἔοικε, διακοσμοῦν τε καὶ προστάττον πάντα τὰ πραττόμενα, καὶ τοῦτό φημι εἶναι τὴν ψυχήν, οὐδὲν ἄλλο ὂν ἢ τὸ ᾧπερ ἕκαστος αὐτὸν κινεῖ.

[7d] Μελίτη

ἀλλὰ φράσον μοι τόδε· ἆρα λέγεις τὰς δόξας σὰς εἶναι ἀλλ᾽ οὐκ ἄλλου τινός, ὅτι πᾶσαι ἐν τῇ σῇ διανοίᾳ ἐγγίγνονται, ἢ δι᾽ ἄλλο τι;

Δημητρία

οὔκ, ἀλλὰ διὰ τοῦτο.

Μελίτη

οὐκοῦν τὰς βουλήσεις σὰς ἡγῇ εἶναι, ὅτι ἐν τῇ σῇ διανοίᾳ ἐγγίγνονται, ἀλλ᾽ οὐκ ἐν τῇ ἄλλου τινός;

Δημητρία

μάλιστά γε.

[7e] Μελίτη

τί δὲ περὶ τῶν ἐλπίδων; ἆρ᾽ οὐ ταύτας σὰς φῂς εἶναι, ὅτι ἐν τῇ σῇ διανοίᾳ ἐγγίγνονται, ἀλλ᾽ οὐκ ἄλλοθί που;

Δημητρία

φημὶ γὰρ οὖν.

Μελίτη

οὕτως τοίνυν κατὰ τὸν αὐτὸν λόγον, ὡς οἶμαι, λέγεις σὰ εἶναι τὰ ὧν ἕνεκα πράττεις, διὰ τὸ ἐν τῇ σῇ διανοίᾳ ἐγγίγνεσθαι.

Δημητρία

πῶς γὰρ οὔ;

Μελίτη

καὶ μὴν σοί γε διὰ τοῦτο ἡ σὴ διάνοια, ὅτι μέρος ἐστὶ τῆς σῆς ψυχῆς.

Δημητρία

πάντως δήπου.

[8a] Μελίτη

εἰ οὖν ταῦτα οὕτως ἔχει, ὦ Δημητρία, οὔπω μοι δοκεῖς ἱκανῶς ἐνδείξασθαι ὅτι ἡ ψυχὴ μία πέφυκεν.

Δημητρία

τί δή;

Μελίτη

ἔλεγες γὰρ ὅτι μία σοι εἴη ἡ ψυχή, διότι ταῦτά σοι παρέχοι ὅσων ἕνεκα πράττοις· ἦ γάρ;

Δημητρία

ναί.

Μελίτη

ἀλλὰ μὴν τὰ τοιαῦτα σὰ ἔφης εἶναι, διὰ τὸ ἐν τῇ σῇ ψυχῇ ἐγγίγνεσθαι.

Δημητρία

πάντως δήπου.

Μελίτη

κύκλῳ δή σοι περιέρχεται ὁ λόγος· φάσκουσα οὖν σὰ εἶναι τὰ ὧν ἕνεκα πράττεις, αὐτὸ τοῦτο ὑπέλαβες ὅπερ ἐζητοῦμεν, πότερον μία ἑκάστῳ ἡ ψυχή.

Δημητρία

ἴσως ἂν εὖ λέγοις.

[8b] Μελίτη

λέγε τοίνυν, ὦ Δημητρία, καὶ μή μοι ἄχθου—δοκεῖς γάρ μοι ὀργίζεσθαι—πῶς καὶ πόθεν οἶσθα ὅτι ἡ ψυχὴ ἕν τι πέφυκεν, μάλα γὰρ δήπου ἐπιθυμῶ μαθεῖν ὅσα φῂς περὶ τούτου εἰδέναι.

Δημητρία

καίτοι οὐκ ἄχθομαί σοι, ὦ φίλη, ἀλλ᾽ ἐμαυτῇ δυσχεραίνω· οὐδὲν γὰρ ποικίλον ὃ λέγω. ὡς γοῦν Θεόκριτός φησιν, ‘ἀδύ τι τὸ ψιθύρισμα καὶ ἁ πίτυς,’ ὅταν πνέοντος ἀνέμου τὰ φύλλα ἅμα κινῆται. τοῖς μὲν γὰρ ὄμμασίν ἐστιν ἀόρατον τοῦτο τὸ πνεῦμα, οὐ μὴν ἀλλὰ δῆλόν γε ὅτι πάρεστιν.

[8c] ὡσαύτως δέ, ὦ Μελίτη, ἀόρατον μέν γε πέφυκεν ἡ ψυχή, καὶ μὴν οὐδείς γε ὅστις οὐ τὴν αὐτοῦ ἐπιδείκνυσιν διακρίνων ὅ τι χρὴ πράττειν ἐν τῷ βίῳ. αὗται δὲ αἱ κρίσεις οὐχ οὕτως μετρηταί εἰσι πρὸς ἀλλήλας ὥσπερ τὰ σώματα· ἀλλὰ τίνα οἴει ἀπαρνήσεσθαι μὴ οὐχὶ ἄλλον ἄλλο περὶ ὧν ἂν πρακτέον ᾖ κρίνειν; τῷ μὲν γάρ τι ἀγαθὸν δοκεῖ εἶναι, τῷ δ᾽ οὔτε ἀγαθὸν οὔτε κακόν, τῷ δὲ καὶ αἰσχρόν. τοῦτο μέντοι δι᾽ ὃ ἐκεῖναι αἱ κρίσεις ἴδιαι καὶ οὐκ ἀλλότριαι, ἔγωγε καλῶ ψυχήν.

[8d] Μελίτη

ἀτάρ, ὦ Δημητρία, πρὶν περὶ τῆς ψυχῆς αὐτῆς καθ᾽ αὑτὴν σκοπεῖν, ᾗπερ διαγιγνώσκομεν, ὡς φῄς, τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ τὸ κακόν, καὶ τὸ βέλτιον καὶ τὸ χεῖρον, καὶ ὅ τι χρὴ πράττειν ἢ φεύγειν, πρῶτον δεῖ

καταμαθεῖν τί ποτε ταῦτα τὰ ὀνόματα σημαίνει. καίτοι οὐδὲν ἧττον χαλεπὴ φαίνεται αὕτη ἡ σκέψις ἢ ἡ περὶ ψυχῆς.

Δημητρία

πῇ δή;

Μελίτη

μέμνησαι γάρ που ἅπερ ἔλεγεν Πλάτων περὶ τοῦ ὅπλα τινὶ παραδόντος καὶ ὕστερον, ἐπειδὴ μανεὶς ἐγένετο, ἀπαιτοῦντος;

Δημητρία

πάνυ γε, ὅτι οὐ δοτέον αὐτὰ τῷ μαινομένῳ· ἄδικον γὰρ ἂν εἴη.

[8e] Μελίτη

ἀλλ᾽ ὅσῳ μᾶλλον ἐγὼ περὶ τοῦδε τοῦ λόγου ἐνεθυμούμην, τοσούτῳ μᾶλλον ἠπόρουν. καὶ γὰρ τὸ ἐκεῖνα ἀποδοῦναι τῷ μαινομένῳ χεῖρον ἂν εἴη τοῦ μὴ ἀποδοῦναι· οὐ γάρ;

Δημητρία

πῶς γὰρ οὔ;

Μελίτη

ὅτι μᾶλλον ἂν βλάπτοι;

Δημητρία

παντάπασι μὲν οὖν.

Μελίτη

καὶ ἐάν τις ἕτερον ἑτέρῳ συμβάλλῃ, τὸ μὲν ἀποδοῦναι τὰ ὅπλα χεῖρον δόξει, τὸ δὲ μὴ ἀποδοῦναι βέλτιον;

Δημητρία

βέλτιον μέντοι.

[9a] Μελίτη

ἐὰν δὲ μὴ συμβάλλῃ ἕτερον ἑτέρῳ, ἀλλ᾽ αὐτὸ τοῦθ᾽ ἁπλῶς σκοπῇ, ἆρ᾽ οὐ δίκαιον φήσει ἀποδοῦναι ἃ ἄν τις παρ᾽ ἄλλου λάβῃ;

Δημητρία

δίκαιον δῆτα.

Μελίτη

τὸ δὲ μὴ ἀποδοῦναι τὰ ἀλλότρια ἄδικον φήσει εἶναι;

Δημητρία

μάλιστά γε.

Μελίτη

ὅτι δὴ ἄδικον ἂν εἴη αὐτὸ καθ᾽ αὑτό;

Δημητρία

ἀληθῆ λέγεις.

Μελίτη

οὐκοῦν χεῖρον ἂν εἴη τὰ ἀλλότρια ἀποδοῦναι, καὶ ἅμα δίκαιον· καὶ ταῦτα ἀμφότερα ἀληθῆ;

Δημητρία

κινδυνεύει, ὦ Μελίτη, ἀλλὰ μέντοι ἄτοπόν γε μοι δοκεῖ.

[9b] Μελίτη

ἄτοπον δῆτα, ἀλλ᾽ οὖν δὴ ἄλλο τι τούτου ἀτοπώτερον ἀποβαίνει. τούτων γὰρ δὴ τῶν δοξῶν οὐδετέρα αὐτὴ καθ᾽ αὑτὴν δηλοῖ ὅ τι χρὴ περὶ τῶν ὅπλων πράττειν· πότερον ἀποδοτέον αὐτά, ὡς δικαίου ὄντος τὰ ἀλλότρια ἀποδοῦναι, ἢ μᾶλλον κατέχειν, ὡς ἀμείνονος ὄντος, ἵνα μὴ βλάπτῃ τὸν μαινόμενον;

Δημητρία

οὐκ ἔχω λέγειν.

Μελίτη

ἐδόκει οὖν μοι τότε, καὶ νῦν ἔτι δοκεῖ, τρία εἶναι τὰ ἐκείνων τῶν δοξῶν γένη, ἀλλ᾽ οὐχ ἓν μόνον· τὸ μὲν πρῶτον τῶν ἁπλῶν δοξῶν, πότερον περὶ ἕκαστον αὐτὸ καθ᾽ αὑτὸ δίκαιον ἢ ἄδικον ἢ ἄλλο τι τῶν τοιούτων, τὸ δὲ δεύτερον τῶν συγκριτικῶν, πότερον ἐκ πλειόνων τὸ μὲν κάλλιον, τὸ δὲ αἴσχιον, τὸ δὲ τρίτον τῶν πρακτικῶν, ὅταν εἴπωμεν τί χρὴ καθ᾽ ἕκαστα πράττειν ἢ φεύγειν.

Δημητρία

τί οὖν δή, ὦ Μελίτη;

[9c] Μελίτη

ἔφησθα γὰρ ἑκάστην ψυχὴν ἰδίως κρίνειν περὶ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ τε καὶ κακοῦ· οὐ γάρ;

Δημητρία

ἔφην μὲν οὖν.

Μελίτη

καὶ νῦν γε ἑωράκαμεν ὅτι οὐχ ἓν μόνον γένος ἐστὶ τῶν περὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα δοξῶν, ἀλλὰ τρία, ἆρ᾽ οὐχ οὕτως;

Δημητρία

οὕτως.

Μελίτη

πρῶτον ἄρα σκεπτέον ὅσα τῶν τριῶν ἑκάστῳ ἴδια γίγνεται.

Δημητρία

κινδυνεύει.

Μελίτη

ἀρξώμεθα μὴν ἀπὸ τῶν περὶ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ τε καὶ κακοῦ δοξῶν. οὐκοῦν ἑκάστῳ αὗταί γε ἴδιαι οὐκ ἔσονται;

Δημητρία

τί δή;

[9d] Μελίτη

ἀλλὰ μὴν καλόν γε, ὡς ἐγᾦμαι, καὶ ἐμοὶ καὶ σοὶ δοκεῖ εἶναι τὸ σύμπαντας τοὺς θεοὺς τιμᾶν· ἦ γάρ;

Δημητρία

πάνυ γε.

Μελίτη

οὐκ ἄρ᾽ ἑτέρα μὲν ἡ ἐμὴ δόξα δοκεῖ εἶναι, ἑτέρα δὲ ἡ σή, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐμοὶ καὶ σοὶ ἡ αὐτή.

Δημητρία

φαίνεται.

Μελίτη

τοιγάρτοι πολλοὶ δὴ ταὐτὰ ταῦτα δοξάζουσιν, ὥσπερ πνέοντος ἑνὸς ἀνέμου ὁμοίως ψοφεῖ φύλλα μυρία.

Δημητρία

ἔοικεν.

Μελίτη

καὶ κοιναὶ δὴ πολλοῖς, οἶμαι, ὅταν περὶ τοῦ καλλίονος δοξάζωμεν· ἡγούμεθα γοῦν ἀμφότεραι κάλλιον εἶναι σύμπαντας τοὺς θεοὺς τιμᾶν ἢ ἀμελεῖν αὐτῶν.

Δημητρία

ἀληθῆ λέγεις.

[9e] Μελίτη

ἀλλὰ τάχ᾽ ἄν, ὦ Δημητρία, ἐν τῷ τῶν δοξῶν τρίτῳ γένει εὕροιμεν ὃ ζητοῦμεν. κρίνω μὲν γὰρ ἔγωγε τί μοι ἐν τῷ παρόντι ποιητέον, ἀλλ᾽ οὖν δὴ κρίνεις τί σοι ποιητέον· ἆρ᾽ οὐκ ἰδίαν τινὰ ἡγῇ ἑκατέραν τὴν δόξαν εἶναι, ἅτε ἰδίου ὄντος τοῦ δι᾽ ὃ ἑκατέρα κρίνει;

Δημητρία

πάνυ μὲν οὖν.

[10a] Μελίτη

καίτοι, ὦ Δημητρία, μεγάλην τινὰ ἀπορίαν ὁρῶ.

Δημητρία

ἥντινα;

Μελίτη

ἔφαμεν γάρ που τὴν ψυχὴν εἶναι τοῦτο δι᾽ ὃ κρίνει ἕκαστος ὅ τι χρὴ πράττειν· ἦ γάρ;

Δημητρία

ἔφαμεν δῆτα.

Μελίτη

ἀλλὰ μὴν πολλάκις περὶ τῶν τοιούτων ἀποροῦμεν· οὐ μόνον πότερον χρὴ ἀποδοῦναι τὰ ὅπλα τῷ μαινομένῳ, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν ἄλλοις· ἐὰν γάρ τις καὶ εἰδῇ περὶ ὁτουοῦν εἴτε δίκαιον εἴτε ἄδικον, εἴτε βέλτιον ἄλλου του εἴτε καὶ χεῖρον, ἀλλ᾽ οὖν τεκμήριόν γε οὐδὲν ἱκανὸν παρέχει περὶ τοῦ εἰδέναι τί ἐν τῷ παρόντι χρὴ πράττειν· οὐχ οὕτως ὁ λόγος ἄρτι ἐσήμαινεν;

Δημητρία

οὕτως.

[10b] Μελίτη

πῶς οὖν ἂν σαφῶς εἰδεῖμεν μίαν καὶ τὴν αὐτὴν ψυχὴν ἐν ἡμῖν ἐνοῦσαν διὰ παντὸς τοῦ βίου; ἴσως γὰρ ὅταν μὲν ἔχωμεν κρίνειν ὅ τι χρή, τότε ἡμῖν πάρεστιν ἡ ψυχή· ὅταν δὲ μὴ ἔχωμεν, ἄπεστιν ἤδη, καὶ οὐκ ἂν δυναίμεθα ἀναμφισβητήτως εἰπεῖν, ἐπειδὰν αὖθις οἷοί τε γενώμεθα κρίνειν τὰ τοιαῦτα, τὴν αὐτὴν ψυχὴν ἡμῖν παρέσεσθαι ἥπερ καὶ πρότερον.

Δημητρία

κινδυνεύει.

Μελίτη

οὐκ ἄρα τὰ τοιαῦτα δοξαζόμενα, ὡς ἔοικεν, ἱκανὸν τεκμήριον παρέχει ὅτι ἀνάγκη μίαν καὶ τὴν αὐτὴν ψυχὴν ἡμῖν παρεῖναι διὰ βίου.

Δημητρία

φαίνεται.

[10c] Μελίτη

σκόπει τοίνυν καὶ τὰ ἐκ τοῦ λόγου συμβαίνοντα. εἰ γὰρ δὴ οὕτως διώρισται ἑκάστη ψυχή, τῷ ἄλλη ἄλλως κρίνει τί πρακτέον, ἐπειδὴ ἐνίοτε μὲν ἔχομεν οὕτω ποιεῖν, ἐνίοτε δ᾽ οὔ, τάχ᾽ ἂν εἴη ἄλλοτε ἄλλη ψυχὴ ἐν ἑνὶ ἀνθρώπῳ.

Δημητρία

ἔοικε γοῦν.

Μελίτη

ἦ που ἄρα ἡ ψυχή, τῷ σώματι ὀλίγον μόνον χρόνον παροῦσα, ἀπόλλυται ἐν αὐτῷ, ὥσπερ τὰ καλούμενα ἐφήμερα, μίαν μόνην ἡμέραν ζῶντα, ἀποθνῄσκουσι περὶ ἡλίου δυσμάς.

Δημητρία

ἴσως.

Μελίτη

τούτων τοίνυν οὕτως ἐχόντων, ὦ Δημητρία, οὐχ ἱκανῶς ἡμῖν ἀποδέδεικται ὡς ἕν τι καὶ ἀθάνατον πέφυκεν ἡ ψυχή.

Δημητρία

κινδυνεύει.

[10d] Μελίτη

καὶ μὴν καὶ χαλεπώτερόν τι ἐκ τούτου τοῦ λόγου ἂν συμβαίνοι.

Δημητρία

τί δὴ τοῦτο, ὦ Μελίτη;

Μελίτη

οἱ γὰρ πρῶτοι ποιηταὶ περὶ ψυχῆς ἔλεγον ὡς εἴη τι τῶν ὄντων· πόθεν μὲν οὖν ταῦτα ἐπύθοντο, οὐκ ἴσμεν, ἀλλὰ πάντες γε σχεδὸν ταὐτὸν ἔφασαν περὶ τῶν τοιούτων.

Δημητρία

ἀληθῆ λέγεις.

Μελίτη

ἐπειδὴ δὲ σοφοί τινες βέλτιόν τε καὶ ἀκριβέστερον ἐζήτησαν ὅ τι ἐστὶν ἡ ψυχή, ηὖρον τὴν ψυχὴν καὶ κρίνουσαν τί ποιητέον· ἦ γάρ;

Δημητρία

ναί.

[10e] Μελίτη

τί δ᾽ εἰ τὸ ἥμισυ μόνον ταύτης τῆς σκέψεως ἀποτετέλεσται; τί γὰρ οὖν κωλύει ἡμᾶς ἡγεῖσθαι τὴν λεγομένην ψυχὴν οὔ τι τῶν ὄντων εἶναι, ἀλλ᾽ ὄνομα μόνον, σημαῖνον οὐδὲν ἄλλο ἢ τὸ κεφάλαιον τῶν προειρημένων δοξῶν, αἴσπερ χρώμενος ἕκαστος κρίνει τί χρὴ πράττειν; εἰ γὰρ ταῦθ᾽ οὕτως ἔχοι, μάτην ἂν ζητοῖμεν πότερον

ἀθάνατόν ἐστιν ἡ ψυχή, ἢ καὶ κενὸν εἴδωλον ἂν εἴη, ὥσπερ μορμολυκεῖον, ὃ δή, καίπερ οὐκ ὄν, τὰ παιδία πάντων μάλιστα φοβεῖ.

[11a] καὶ διὰ ταῦτά γε μένω πρὸς τῷδε τῷ σήματι, ὦ Δημητρία, ἔγνων γὰρ δὴ τὴν ὑπ᾽ αὐτῷ κειμένην γυναῖκα. ἐπεί τοι καὶ τροφός μοι ἦν, ὁπότε δὲ φοβοίμην, παρεμυθεῖτό με λέγουσα θαυμασίους τινὰς μύθους περὶ τῶν μὲν ἀθανάτων ἐν Ὀλύμπῳ οἰκούντων θεῶν, περὶ τῶν δὲ ἀθανάτων ψυχῶν ὧνπερ οἱ θεοὶ ἀεὶ ἐπιμελοῦνται.

καὶ μέντοι πολλάκις ἔφη τὸ τοῦ πυροῦ σπέρμα, ἀπαλλαγέν τε τοῦ ἀποθνῄσκοντος φυτοῦ καὶ κατορωρυγμένον, φύειν βλάστην· οὕτω δὴ καὶ τελευτήσαντος τοῦ ἀνθρώπου καὶ ἐν γῇ κατορωρυγμένου, τὴν ζῶσαν ψυχὴν ἀπαλλάττεσθαι τοῦ νεκροῦ.

[11b] ἀλλ᾽ ἐπειδὴ βαρέως ἠσθένησεν—καὶ νῦν ἔτι αὐτὴν ἐγὼ δοκῶ ὁρᾶν τε καὶ ἀκούειν—ἔλεγέν μοι βοῶσα· ‘οἴμοι τάλαινα· αἰαῖ αἰαῖ· σῶσόν με, ὦ Μελίτη’, καὶ τῆς χειρὸς οὕτως ἰσχυρῶς ἐπελάβετο ὥστ᾽ ἐδάκρυσα. κἀγὼ πολλάκις ἀπεκρινόμην· ‘οὐ δύναμαι.’

καὶ δῆτα ὀδυρομένη οὐκέτι ἤθελεν ἀκοῦσαι ἐκείνους τοὺς περὶ τῶν θεῶν καὶ τῶν ἡμετέρων ψυχῶν μύθους. τελευτῶσα μέντοι εἰς ἐμὲ οὕτως ἀπέβλεψεν, ὥσπερ βουλομένη τι λέγειν, ἀλλὰ σιγῇ ἀπέθανεν.

[11c] πεῖσον οὖν με, ὦ Δημητρία, ὅτι ἔτι ἔστιν ἡ ψυχὴ αὐτῆς.

Δημητρία

καίτοι μὴ οὐ δύνηταί σε πεῖσαι ἡ ἀνθρωπίνη σοφία, ὦ Μελίτη, ὡς οὐδεμία ψυχὴ ἀπόλλυται ὑπὸ τοῦ θανάτου· ὅταν δὲ ταύτης τῆς νυκτός εἰς Ἐλευσῖνα ἀφικομένη ἴδῃς τὰ ἐκεῖ δεικνύμενα, σαφέστερον σοι, ὡς ἐγῷμαι, γενήσεται. φέρε δή, ἴωμεν παρὰ τοὺς ἄλλους· καὶ γὰρ ἤδη ὥρα ἡμῖν ἀπιέναι.—

τί δέ; οὐχ ἥξεις, ὦ παρθένε;

[11d] Μελίτη

οὔπω γε· εἰλιγγιῶ γὰρ οὖν ἔγωγε καὶ ὑποτρέμω—μᾶλλον δὲ σφόδρα τρέμω—καὶ σκότον γε δὴ πανταχῇ ὁρῶ· οὐ δῆτα, ἀλλὰ δοκῶ μοί τι

δεινὸν προορᾶν· τὴν τῆς τροφοῦ ἀθλιωτάτην καὶ οἰκτροτάτην—ἀτὰρ οὐκ ἐρῶ οὐδὲν τοιοῦτον.

ἀλλ᾽ ἄπιθι, ὦ Δημητρία· μὴ γὰρ ἤδη μένωσί σε πάντες οἱ ἕτοιμοι εἰς Ἐλευσῖνα πομπεύειν· ἐγὼ μέντοι ἐνθάδε μενῶ, ἕως ἂν παύσηται αὕτη ἡ ἐν ἐμοὶ ταραχή.

3 English translation

[1a] Demetria

Good heavens! I was not expecting to meet you here, Melita. Come here—the darkness makes it hard to see clearly. What is this? Have you really come crowned with myrtle, as though you meant to come with us to Eleusis?

Melita

I have indeed.

Demetria

What are you saying, young girl? Do you really wish to be initiated into the Greater Mysteries?

Melita

Perhaps.

Demetria

I am truly astonished if you really mean to do this, for I would have suspected that you looked down on the Mysteries, and that you considered us as zealous for rituals, but neglecting the truth.

[1b] Melita

By Zeus, Demetria, not at all! Nor, being unmarried, would I myself call you or anyone else a lover. And the poets say that those rites are

beneficial to those who are initiated—in fact, they say that such things are not merely beneficial, but most beneficial. For, as Sophocles says,

> Thrice-blessed are those mortals who, having beheld these rites,
> come to Hades; for to them alone
> is it granted to live there; for the rest, all is woe.

[1c] Demetria

By Zeus, you speak truly! But tell me, Melita, from whom did you learn these things about the Mysteries? Was it from one of your relatives?

Melita

Not at all, since none of them educated me properly; and so whenever I heard someone talking about such matters in the marketplace, I used to listen, and learn from him in this way.

But tell me, why have you come here? Shouldn't you, as Demeter's priestess, already be at the Eleusinion? Surely some strange thing must have happened for you to be in the Kerameikos now?

[1d] Demetria

Not merely strange, Melita, but the strangest thing of all. I went in very early to the Eleusinion to do the appropriate things—and yet, as you know, I cannot tell you what sort of things these are, or even give a hint—let those matters remain unspoken between us, young girl.

When those things were done, I thought I saw a bright gleam outside; then, stepping out of the temple, I saw someone departing, who appeared to be a woman, and yet she shone—yes, she truly shone—like a star.

[1e] At first, when I caught sight of her, I was utterly startled and could not move, for I truly thought I was dreaming. Then I remembered the very lines in which Homer describes Demeter appearing to a mortal:

> Light shone far from the goddess's immortal skin,
> golden hair lay on her shoulders,
> and the house was filled with a close, star-like radiance.

So I eagerly followed after her; but when I came here, I did not find the goddess anywhere; instead, I found you alone, Melita, standing in the Kerameikos.

Now tell me this: why are you waiting here? Do you not know that the people who are going to march to Eleusis are gathering elsewhere?

[2a] Melita

I do indeed, Demetria, but when I was walking that way, I was suddenly struck by the sight of a gravestone.

Demetria

What? This one?

Melita

Yes indeed.

Demetria

Why is that?

Melita

It seems to me at once wondrous and delightful to behold. Were I to see my nearest and dearest dead, I would experience extreme grief at having lost them. But the feeling I have at the moment is the very

contrary—as this gravestone does not in any way resemble the woman buried here (for I knew her), but is only a memorial. So whenever I see such a thing, I feel great joy, and am pleasantly reminded of what she used to say and do while she was still alive. Therefore, Demetria, if there is anything I might truly call delightful to behold, it is surely this.

[2b] Demetria

Yes, delightful enough—but not, I think, likely to remain so forever; for when winds and rains and earthquakes come, I fully expect that this will be utterly ruined in due course of time. But that the soul is immortal and never destroyed—I do not merely expect; I know it with certainty.

Melita

What are you saying, Demetria? Are you now telling me mystic secrets about the soul's nature? And yet I thought you would not disclose such things to anyone else, except to the initiated. Am I right?

Demetria

Quite so, young girl; yet I have not said any of the secret doctrines spoken in the Mysteries, but rather what would be evident to those who reason correctly.

[2c] Melita

How do you mean? Are you able to prove that the soul is immortal?

Demetria

Yes indeed; and since there is still time, I will give that proof now, if you are willing to hear it.

Melita

Yes, by Zeus, I certainly am! And indeed, I feel quite lucky to have met with you just now; for it seems I shall learn the nature of the soul today not once, but twice—first by human argument here, and then by a divine revelation at Eleusis. Now then, explain to me what you claimed to know clearly about these matters.

[2d] Demetria

Well then, Melita, we all sometimes see visible things otherwise than as they are: we take equals for unequal, the near for the distant, and make many other such mistakes—so that often it becomes unclear to us how things truly stand. But when we prove something using sufficient reasoning, each of us will inevitably grasp the truth. It is in this way that we can come to know that the soul is, by nature, immortal.

Now, I ask you, set aside whatever opinions about the soul you have formed from the senses—just as passengers on board a ship go wherever the pilot steers it, so should you admit only what the argument compels you to admit.

Melita

I will do so.

[2e] Demetria

First, then, before proving that the soul is immortal, let us review the story the poets tell about Death; for in framing that story, whether by some divine inspiration or in some other way, they seem to me to have grasped some image of the truth.

Zeus, so they say—the mightiest and most powerful of the gods—is not strong enough to oppose Death himself, nor was he able to save Sarpedon from death, though he was his own son; but, grieving, he cried:

> Woe is me, my Sarpedon—dearest of men—to have been struck down by Patroclus, son of Menoetius!

For indeed, no one can hinder Death—no, not by gifts, nor by prayers, nor by sacrifices, nor by children's tears, nor by parents' lamentations—nor even if Zeus the Saviour should will it.

[3a] For this reason, Apollo said that the ways of Death are 'enemies loathed alike by gods and mortals'. Let us then grant the poets this much—Death destroys and annihilates the person to whom he comes so completely, that the dead person is no longer to be found anywhere, nor is it possible for him to be brought back to life.

And yet, none of these poets ever said, or even hinted, that the soul must be destroyed whenever anyone dies: they said that on that day the human being perishes, but the soul survives. Euripides, for instance, says:

> I see that Death is already near,
> priest of the dead, who is going to lead her down
> to the house of Hades: he has arrived at the appropriate time,
> keeping watch for this day on which she is due to die.

—But now, Melita, you obviously doubt this.

[3b] Melita

By Zeus, I do not, Demetria!

Demetria

Yes, you do disbelieve—and rightly so: just as a mother could not express what she suffers after her little child has died, whether by crying out or by keeping silent—for she suffers more than can be expressed—so too the poets, being moved by divine inspiration, have displayed to us marvellous and most beautiful images of real things, but not reality itself.

[3c] I, however, shall not tell you a myth, but shall prove the soul's immortality from the following considerations: first, the soul is the principle by which human beings move of themselves. Such a thing does not perish merely because the human body undergoes growth, change or decay. And if each person's moving principle could not be destroyed by any such things, then it would not be annihilated by a person's death either. But we must call immortal whatever is not destroyed by death. One must therefore agree that the soul is an immortal thing.

[3d] I will begin my argument from this point, Melita: from the fact that the soul is, by nature, distinct from the human being in whom it is present only for a brief time. For others have simply assumed this without reasoning, and yet how could anyone properly claim that the soul is immortal, unless they think that it is something different by nature from the mortal human being?

Melita

Agreed, how could they?

[3e] Demetria

Come then, tell me this: is there not a desire within you to go on existing after death?—What? You are not replying, Melita? Do not conceal in any way what you believe about such things, for we are alone here, so that no one will hear you except me, but respond frankly.

Melita

There is indeed.

Demetria

Now, do you assert that you yourself will continue to exist after your death, or something else?

Melita

What do you mean, Demetria?

[4a] Demetria

You know, of course, that you too must die at some point, do you not?

Melita

Very much so.

Demetria

And when you die, you will no longer exist—neither as you are now, nor in any other way.

Melita

That is true.

Demetria

You hope, then, that something of you will go on existing when you yourself are no more as a human being.

Melita

Of course.

Demetria

Then you must think that there is something in you now that will not be destroyed by Death—which we call, if there is such a thing, the soul.

Melita

Absolutely, Demetria.

[4b] Demetria

And just as the immortals implanted in us the desire that our children will go on living after we have died, so too everyone desires that their soul should go on living when it leaves the body, like a passenger who, when their ship sinks, desires to be saved and to go on living.

Let this at least stand as evidence that we ordinarily take the soul to be distinct from the human being in whom it happens to be present; now we must examine the next point—the nature of the soul.

Melita

Indeed we must.

[4c] Demetria

Well then, that is not a difficult thing to investigate, but in fact the easiest of all. Do you think that there is anyone so senseless and devoid of understanding, that they cannot distinguish a living body from a lifeless one? For in the dead person there is no longer that by which, while living, they were able to move themselves. We must therefore admit that this is nothing other than the soul. Note that I am only showing, for the moment, that each person's moving principle will continue to exist after death.

[4d] For if we try to define anything, young girl, we must above all take care, lest we say something harder to understand than is necessary: for we may be tempted, believing in our own wisdom, to reject what is obvious to everyone—even if it seems correct to us—and instead to proclaim something grander, more solemn, and more elaborate than the truth. However, we should assert only that, Melita, which seems to be clearest and most true.

Let us therefore assert, just as we were saying a moment ago, that—since nothing is clearer or truer than this—that the soul is just that very thing by virtue of which everyone moves themselves.

[4e] And this power never changes in itself. For we observe that, whenever any body whatsoever changes, the moving principle remains: for in all such cases, we do not say that it comes into being from nothing, nor that it passes away into nothing; rather, the body changes form in many ways—sometimes becoming hotter, at other times cooler, and at yet other times changing in other ways—while the moving principle always remains as it was, neither increasing nor diminishing. Those who accurately study bodily phenomena have never observed it changing.

[5a] We must therefore agree that this ability to move oneself does not come into being from nothing, or pass away into nothing, when the body changes, but always remains the same, and never in itself admits any change. For indeed, even if someone investigated every type of change most carefully, they would not find anything which the moving principle itself (rather than the body) might suffer. For it will always have the same quantity that it now has, although moving to other places and passing through visible things, nor is it ever created, nor does it pass away, but it is conserved throughout all time.

[5b] And since this is the case, the moving principle itself will never be utterly obliterated. For, if it were destroyed, it would pass from being into non-being. Yet we have just agreed that it is present in every change, and that it is not destroyed in any change. Therefore, there is no change by which it could be annihilated. For how could that, which persists through every change, be destroyed by any change whatsoever? And so, if the soul belongs to that class of things which remain present throughout every bodily change, then no such change could destroy it.

[5c] Let us then investigate what follows from this, young girl. Death, as the poets say, is nothing other than the destruction of the human being—for when a human being dies, they no longer exist; if, however, something is indestructible by nature, it could not be subject to that type of destruction by which destructible things are

annihilated. And since we say that death is a kind of destruction, what should we call that which suffers no destruction whatsoever when a human being dies, if not immortal? For by 'immortal' I simply mean that which is not in any way destroyed by death. And so, whatever is indestructible must also be immortal in this way, for if something cannot be destroyed in any way, how could it be annihilated by death?

[5d] Now then, Melita, let us see what follows from what has been said. We have agreed, first, that a person's soul is nothing other than the principle by which they move themselves. Next, that such principle persists through each change and is never annihilated. And since this is so, it is indestructible and so immortal. From these premises it is clear that when a human being dies, the soul is not annihilated. But that which is not annihilated by death in any way is immortal; the soul must, therefore, be immortal, according to this argument.

[5e] For just as Homer says,

> When wave upon wave rises on the echoing shore, driven onward by the West Wind — cresting first out at sea, then crashing with a great roar as it breaks on the beach, rearing up in a curving arch around the headlands and spitting out its salt foam;

and yet the moving principle will persist, even after the wave itself is completely broken up; in the same way, whenever someone dies, it is not necessary that it too will be destroyed.

And therefore Death, as we say, comes to all human beings: at that time they cease to perceive and to move, and their bodies, having become cold, decay and waste away in due course of time; but the moving principle, which we call the soul, will not suffer any such thing, either then or at any other time. Therefore, young girl, we must agree that the soul is immortal.

[6a] And so if the son of Night were to come threatening to destroy not only me but also my soul, I would smile and say to him gently:

> Hail, my friend. I willingly hand my life over to you, for you are right to reclaim what is yours. But there is no way in which my soul can be annihilated. So then, let us do what we must, Death: my soul to journey to Hades, and you to lead it on—for so the Fates compel us both.

[6b] Melita

You speak finely, Demetria—I was almost convinced by the argument. And yet, let us examine these points from the beginning. Do you claim that the soul is nothing other than the moving principle—and, what is more, an invisible one?

Demetria

I do.

Melita

And yet such a thing would be a kind of quantity, like three or six, capable of being greater, less, or equal in relation to another. And so, Demetria, are you saying that one of our souls is larger and the other smaller, and someone would be able to measure them, whether in terms of length, or weight, or in any way whatsoever?

[6c] I am not even asking whether you believe that all the attributes of your soul—your memories, your knowledge, your virtues, and other things of the sort—will survive your death, but whether you really believe the soul to be something like this: that which now animates the body, yet once upon a time may have stirred a wave, a cloud, or a wind?

For you seem to me to be saying such a thing—How could we then know that it remains one and the same as itself throughout the whole of time, rather than being some mere quantity, spread in all directions throughout the universe?—But perhaps this is what you mean.

Demetria

By Zeus, Melita, not at all!

[6d] And tell me, are you inquiring because you wish to learn, or merely testing me for fun?

Melita

Why do you ask, Demetria?

Demetria

I ask because nothing is more wearisome to me than for my deeply held beliefs to be challenged by someone displaying verbal cleverness—if, then, you are seeking victory in the debate, aiming to embarrass me and to appear clever yourself, let us break off the conversation.

Melita

Not at all, Demetria—I really do wish to learn from you about the nature of the soul.

[6e] Demetria

Very well, young girl. Well then, the soul seems to me to resemble one of the gods from the myths, being something invisible, and the cause of each person's actions on every occasion. For Homer said about Achilles:

> On the tenth day Achilles called the people to assembly, for the goddess, white-armed Hera, put it into his mind to do so;

however, speaking precisely, we ought to say that Achilles was not moved by the goddess in this way, but by his own soul.

[7a] Melita

I think I understand what you are saying, but let us leave behind the world of myth, and tell me what it is that makes a soul a single thing by nature.

Demetria

I do not understand what you mean.

Melita

Well, what would prevent you from having three souls, or five, or even countless souls? For I suspect you are not saying that because you have only one body, you also necessarily have one soul.

Demetria

Why not?

[7b] Melita

The soul, according to you, is immortal, and so obviously passes only a small portion of eternity within the body, does it not?

Demetria

Certainly.

Melita

It would be strange, then, to say the soul is one because it spends a short amount of time in a body; just as it would be strange to call someone an Athenian if they reside here for a short time, living the rest of their life elsewhere.

Demetria

So it seems.

[7c] Melita

On what basis, then, do you say that the soul is one?

Demetria

When I recall all the things I have done throughout my life, Melita, I do not see them as done randomly, but as well ordered and regular. I have not been compelled to act by different desires at different times, like a ship driven in all directions by wild storms, so as to seem to be many women rather than one, but there is something inside me, as it seems, regulating and directing everything I do, and this, I say, is what the soul is, being nothing other than the moving principle.

[7d] Melita

But tell me this: do you say that your opinions are yours, and not the thoughts of another, because they all occur in your mind, or for some other reason?

Demetria

For that very reason.

Melita

And you think that your wishes are yours, because they occur in your mind, rather than in the mind of another?

Demetria

Most certainly.

[7e] Melita

What about your hopes? Do you not say that these are yours, because they occur in your mind, rather than anywhere else?

Demetria

I do.

Melita

And the same applies, I suppose, to your motives: you say that these are yours, because they occur in your mind.

Demetria

Of course.

Melita

And your mind is yours, because it is a part of your soul.

Demetria

Absolutely.

[8a] Melita

Then if that is the case, Demetria, I think you have not sufficiently shown that the soul is a single thing by nature.

Demetria

Why is that?

Melita

Well, you said that your soul is a unity, because it is the source of all your motives, did you not?

Demetria

I did.

Melita

But then you said that your motives are yours, because they occur in your soul.

Demetria

Absolutely.

Melita

Your account, then, clearly runs in a circle: when you were saying that your motives are yours, you assumed the very thing that we were investigating—whether the soul is one for each person.

Demetria

You may be right.

[8b] Melita

Say then, Demetria—and do not be irritated, for you seem to be angry—say how and from what source you know that the soul is a single thing by nature, for I really wish to learn all that you say you know about this.

Demetria

I am not irritated with you, young girl, but frustrated with myself, for what I mean is really something quite simple. As Theocritus says, ‘Sweet is the whispering of the pine tree,’ when its foliage moves all together as a wind blows. This wind is invisible to the eyes, and yet obviously present.

[8c] In the same way, the soul is invisible by nature, but everyone reveals their own soul whenever they judge what they ought to do in life. These judgements cannot be measured against one other as bodies can; but who would dare deny that each of us judges differently concerning what ought to be done? What one person considers good, another regards as neither good nor bad, and yet another finds positively shameful. I therefore call the soul this thing due to which those judgements are my own, rather than another’s.

[8d] Melita

But now, Demetria, before we investigate the soul in itself, by which, as you say, we distinguish good and evil, the better and the worse, and what ought to be done or avoided, we must first understand what these terms mean. And yet this investigation involves just as many difficulties as the one into the soul.

Demetria

In what way?

Melita

Well, do you recall what Plato said about the man who lent weapons to someone else, and then asked for them back after he had gone mad?

Demetria

Yes indeed: that one ought not to return them to the madman, for it would be unjust to do so.

[8e] Melita

Well, the more I thought about this story, the more I became confused. Now, it would certainly be worse to return those things to the madman, rather than withholding them, would it not?

Demetria

Of course.

Melita

Because it would be more harmful?

Demetria

Completely so.

Melita

And if someone compares one scenario against the other, giving back the weapons will seem worse, and withholding them better?

Demetria

Better indeed.

[9a] Melita

And yet, if he does not compare the two scenarios, but considers this simply, will he not say that it is right to return what one has received from another?

Demetria

Right indeed.

Melita

And he will say that withholding another's property is wrong?

Demetria

Most certainly.

Melita

Because it would be unjust in itself?

Demetria

Correct.

Melita

And so it would be worse to return the property of another, yet at the same time it would be right to do so—and both statements are true?

Demetria

I suppose so, Melita, but that seems strange to me.

[9b] Melita

Strange, indeed—and yet something even stranger arises as a result. For neither of these opinions, by itself, indicates what one ought to do with the weapons—should one return them, as is right to do with what one has received? Or should one keep them, as is better, in order to avoid harming the other?

Demetria

I am unable to say.

Melita

It seemed therefore to me then, and still does now, that there are three classes of those opinions, not one class only—the first treating simple opinions, as to whether any particular thing is, in itself, right or wrong or anything else of the sort; the second, comparative opinions, as to whether of multiple things one is more fine and another is more shameful; the third, practical opinions, when we say what one ought to do or avoid in any case.

Demetria

But how is this relevant to our discussion, Melita?

[9c] Melita

Well, you said that each soul is unique in its opinions of good and evil, did you not?

Demetria

I did.

Melita

And we have seen that there is not only one type of opinion about such things, but three, have we not?

Demetria

We have.

Melita

We therefore need to investigate first how many of the three classes of opinion are unique to each person.

Demetria

I suppose so.

Melita

Well, let us start with simple opinions of good and evil. Surely these will not be unique to each person?

Demetria

Why is that?

[9d] Melita

Well, surely we both agree, do we not, that it is a fine thing to honour all the gods?

Demetria

Of course.

Melita

It seems, then, that the opinion is not one thing for me and another for you, but the very same for both of us.

Demetria

It appears so.

Melita

So multiple people share the same opinion, just as countless leaves make the same sound when a single wind blows.

Demetria

So it seems.

Melita

And our opinions concerning what is finer are also, I think, common to many: for we both believe that honouring all the gods is a finer thing than neglecting them.

Demetria

True.

[9e] Melita

But perhaps, Demetria, we may find in the third class of opinion what we have been seeking. For I judge what I ought to do in the present circumstances, and you judge what you ought to do. Do you not think that each of these opinions is a unique thing, since we each have a unique reason for having this opinion?

Demetria

Yes indeed.

[10a] Melita

And yet, Demetria, I see a great difficulty.

Demetria

Which one?

Melita

We said, I think, that the soul is that by virtue of which each person judges what they ought to do, did we not?

Demetria

We did.

Melita

But we are often at a loss concerning such things—not only whether we ought to return weapons to a madman, but also in other cases. For even if someone knows concerning a particular action whether it is right or wrong, or whether it is better or even worse than something else, this does not provide any certain basis for knowing what he ought to do in the present circumstances—was that not what the argument showed a little earlier?

Demetria

It was.

[10b] Melita

But then, how could we know for certain that there is a single soul within us throughout the whole course of our life? For perhaps the soul is only within us for so long as we can make practical judgements, and whenever we are not able to do so, it is already absent, and we could not say indisputably that, whenever we regain the ability to make such judgements, the same soul will be within us as before.

Demetria

It seems so.

Melita

So those opinions cannot, as it seems, serve as an adequate proof that one and the same soul is necessarily present in us throughout life.

Demetria

So it appears.

[10c] Melita

Consider also the consequences of the argument. For if each soul is distinguished in this way, by each judging differently what ought to be done, since we are sometimes able to do this, sometimes not, perhaps there is one soul in a person at one time, and a different soul in the same person at a different time.

Demetria

So it appears.

Melita

So perhaps a soul remains present in the body only briefly before being annihilated within it, like so-called mayflies which, living for only one day, die around sunset.

Demetria

Perhaps.

Melita

But in that case, Demetria, it has not been sufficiently shown that the soul is by nature one thing and immortal.

Demetria

I suppose so.

[10d] Melita

And the argument could lead us to an even more difficult conclusion.

Demetria

What is that, Melita?

Melita

Well, the earliest poets spoke of the soul as something real in the universe—we do not know where they obtained this knowledge from, but they all spoke about such things in almost the same way.

Demetria

True.

Melita

And then, when some wise people investigated more carefully and accurately what the soul is, they realised that the soul also judges what one ought to do, did they not?

Demetria

They did.

[10e] Melita

But what if the investigation of this question is only half complete? What prevents us from thinking that the so-called soul is not at all a real thing, but a mere word indicating only the sum total of the opinions of which we were speaking before, which each person uses to judge what he ought to do?

If that were the case, then it would be pointless to investigate the immortality of the soul—a thing that would be an empty phantom

of the mind, like a monster that, even though it does not exist, terrifies children more than anything else.

[11a] And that is why I remain beside this gravestone, Demetria—I knew the woman buried beneath it. For you see, she was my nurse,

and whenever I was scared, she consoled me by telling some wonderful stories about the immortal gods dwelling on Mount Olympus, and about our own immortal souls that are under the eternal protection of the gods.

She used to say often that a grain of wheat, separated from its dying plant and buried, produces a sprout; so too, she said, when a person has died and been buried in the earth, the living soul is released from the corpse.

[11b] But when she fell gravely ill—and I seem to see and hear her still now—she cried out to me, 'Oh, poor me! Ah, ah, the pain! Save me, Melita!', gripping my hand so tightly that it brought tears to my eyes. 'I cannot!' I would reply over and over.

And she, weeping, no longer wanted to listen to those stories about the gods and our souls. In her final moments she looked at me intently, as if wanting to say something, but she died in silence.

[11c] Convince me, Demetria, that her soul still exists!

Demetria

But I suspect that human wisdom is not able to persuade you, Melita, that no soul is destroyed by death; but when you arrive at Eleusis tonight, and see what is shown there, this will, I think, become clearer to you. But come now, let us go to the others: for it is already time to depart.—

What? Will you not come, young girl?

[11d] Melita

Not yet: I feel faint, and am trembling a little—in fact, I tremble all over—and am surrounded by darkness; no, I seem to see something

terrifying before me: my nurse's most pitiable and lamentable— but no, I will not say such a thing.

You should depart, Demetria: I suspect that those ready to march to Eleusis are already waiting for you; I will stay here until this turmoil inside me ceases.

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